Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

Syllabus

PA 3990: Making a Change in the World - Contemporary Public Policy (3 credits)
Spring 2016, W 4:40-7:20pm; HHH 60

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Office: Humphrey Center, 280C, Office Hours: Mondays 4:00-5:00pm and by appointment

Course Description and Outcomes:
This course presents a foundation for understanding the what, who, where, and how of public policy making. The course will explore these components from different perspectives while delving into questions like: What is public policy good for? Who decides policy priorities? What effect does public policy actually have in solving public problems?

After successfully completing this course students will:
● Understand the process, structure, and context of policymaking.
● Identify who, how, and what influences the policy process.
● Apply knowledge of public policy and the policymaking process to a specific policy issue.
● Have the ability to lead discussions that critically analyze aspects of the public policy making process.

Course Organization:
The class involves one weekly class session that consist of lectures, discussion, and guest speakers. Students should expect to spend approximately five hours per week of outside work, including completing class readings and assignments (this equals approximately two hours of work outside of class for every one hour in class). Students are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments in class as active class participation is a key component of this course and part of the final grade.

Course Readings:
Required readings are listed below by class session. All readings are available through download on the course web site on Moodle. I will ask questions about the readings in class. Evidence of completion and reflection on the readings is an important factor in the participation grade.
Most of our readings will come from the following five books. You are not required to purchase these books for the course, however, if you find them to be engaging and informative, I encourage you to add them to your library!


Course Requirements:
The requirements for the course include your participation in class, a small group facilitation of class discussion, and a policy portfolio. Your final grade will be divided as follows:

1. Course Participation (20 points): Everyone is expected to be prepared to discuss the weekly readings and to participate in class discussions. Participation, not simply attendance, is vital to your success in this course. Active participation includes completion of the required reading, participation in class discussion, and active involvement in class activities. Additionally, your course participation grade includes writing a brief (300-500 words) response to one of the discussion questions posed by the facilitation group in advance of class. (The facilitation groups are described below). You will post your responses to Moodle by 5pm the day before class [after Spring Break, the deadline was changed to by midnight the day before class].

An important note on classroom decorum: The classroom provides a learning environment where open and professional discussion and expression of many ideas are promoted, expected, and encouraged. Come to our classroom prepared to engage in meaningful exchanges of ideas and perspectives about the subject matter. We will be discussing the readings and material presented during class so that you can deepen your understanding of the subject. You are encouraged to enter into debates that challenge ideas! Just remember to keep the conversation respectful by listening, clarifying your understanding of issues, by keeping your questions to the ideas and by not engaging in personal criticism. Do participate, do not expect other students to “cover the crater of silence,” and if you don’t understand the material, just say so. Do not doubt yourself: participate! Engaging is to make and re-make the world: participate!

2. Class Facilitation (30 points): You will have the opportunity to sign up with one other student to facilitate a class discussion twice during the semester. In your small group, you will plan and facilitate a class discussion on the topics covered in the readings for that day. In preparation for your class facilitation, you and your partner will each conduct one additional reading on the class topic that is not included in the assigned reading list and you will each prepare a one-page reflection paper to be presented and distributed to the class on the day of your facilitation. Your facilitation group will submit a facilitation plan to the instructor and a set of discussion questions for the class to consider prior to class. Details on this assignment are found on the course Moodle site.

3. Policy Portfolio (50 points): Over the course of the semester, you will be learning the principles and fundamentals of public policy. You will have the opportunity to apply what you are learning throughout the semester to a series of short memos and briefs (500-2,000 words, depending on the assignment) that by the end of the semester will culminate into a portfolio of work that will reflect your knowledge of public policy and the policymaking process to a specific policy issue.
In order to accomplish this, you will each be receiving a “promotion” to become a research analyst for any agency, non-profit, think tank, or private firm of your choice. This promotion comes with the key assignment of addressing the following question (this question will be your guide through the portfolio assignments):

**What is an important national domestic problem for which a solution should be found by 2020?**

You will be offering your advice from the perspective of the organization for which you have chosen to work. In other words, you will be promoting your organization’s interest in defining a national problem and developing potential solutions.

The elements of your portfolio will include the following:

1. Submit via Moodle a note to me, no later than February 2, indicating the organization, firm, or agency for which you plan to work. In that note, describe for whom you will work, why you chose that organization, and also include a link to its website. (2 points)

2. A short memo (about 500-700 words) formally describing for whom you will work, describing a public problem that you believe your organization should publicize, and for which it should seek a solution. In this memo, you will use logic and evidence to explain the significance of the problem, the harms done by the problem, and the need for some sort of solution. (3 points)

3. A briefing paper explaining the policy environment in which your organization operates. What trends in the social, economic, political, scientific, and technological environments will affect the work your organization will undertake in the coming years? (15 points)

4. An opinion piece for a newspaper, of no more than 750 words, explaining the problem to a mass audience and advocating that solutions be sought for this problem. (10 points)

5. A memo describing the types of policy tools currently being used, and explaining how those tools could be replaced with other tools that would work better. (15 points)

6. An informal presentation made in class at the end of the semester describing the process and content of your policy portfolio (there will be a peer review component to this grade, therefore, attendance is mandatory at all presentations). (5 points)

More details on portfolio requirements and examples can be found on Moodle.

**Portfolio Grading Policy:** The purpose of assessment is to provide feedback for learning and improvement. As such, for each of the portfolio assignments, I will give an initial grade with feedback after you submit the assignment, but you will also submit the entire portfolio to me at the end of the semester at which time I will review whether, and how, you may have revised your assignments to incorporate my feedback, the feedback of your peers, and your own learning. Depending on the thoughtfulness and learning reflected in the changes, I will raise the final grade of that assignment by a maximum of two notches, e.g. C+ to B, or B to A- etc.)

**Grade Point Equivalents**

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Policies:
Academic integrity: Academic integrity is the pillar of teaching and learning. Students are expected to complete the assignments with honesty. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:
“SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY: submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement.” The full policy can be found at: http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html. Acts of scholastic dishonesty and plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs (http://www.sja.umn.edu) and will result in a grade of “F” or “N” for the entire course. For more information regarding plagiarism, please consult the Universities policies and procedures at: http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment, please ask. I am more than happy to discuss the elements and expectations with you.

Extensions: This course requires that you manage your time well, keeping track of the readings and assignments. Pay attention to the deadlines in the syllabus. In the interest of fairness to your colleagues, deadlines are firm and no late work will be accepted without a medical excuse.

Religious conflicts: Students may ask for reasonable and timely accommodations for religious observances. Please review the syllabus closely to determine if your religion will present scheduling conflicts with any of the assignments. You must inform the instructor of any conflicts within the first two weeks of the semester.

Accommodations: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services and their instructors for a confidential discussion of their individual need for academic accommodations. Disability Services is located in Suite 180 McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak Street. Staff can be reached by calling 612-626-1333 voice or TTY.

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action: The University will provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.html.

Mental Health and Stress Management: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu.
Other Important Considerations:

- **Challenge your assumptions!** Please do not assume that a student’s ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or other differences defines his or her position on topics we discuss. It is an expected skill of public policy professionals to separate distortions and misrepresentations from facts and judgments. By presenting your views and listening to other possibly opposing arguments, you will learn a great deal about critical and creative thinking. If you have difficulty with active participation in class discussions, please see me.

- **We are all learners.** As your instructor, I take my role very seriously, but I don’t take myself too seriously! I am here to serve as a facilitator in your learning journey, but I recognize that I am continually learning and I will likely learn as much (if not more!) from you and this course as you will. At least, that is my hope.

- **Communication expectations in our instant-gratification world.** I will email you at your UMN email address. I don’t treat email like a text or instant message; therefore, to the best of my ability, I will respond to your emails within 48 hours. Any extended conversations about class topics will not occur over email; rather, you will be asked to meet with me, either during office hours or by appointment.

- **Guest speakers.** We will have a number of guest speakers throughout the course. The guests are meant to be an opportunity for you to interact with “real” people engaged in the public policy making process. These are all busy professionals who are taking time out of their work day to come and meet with you. Therefore, attendance (and being on time) is mandatory at all guest appearances. Most of these sessions will not have a required reading, therefore, your job will be to show up and be an engaged listener and discussant.

**Moodle 2.8** – The course website is an important part of the course and is located on Moodle 2.8 (see below for instructions on usage). You must check the website each week to attain the necessary readings, assignments, and grades. To access our Moodle course website, go to [http://moodle.umn.edu](http://moodle.umn.edu). Once logged in, you will see links to the sites to which you have access. If you are not familiar with Moodle 2.8, a good way to get started is to watch the “student orientation” at [https://umconnect.umn.edu/moodleorientation](https://umconnect.umn.edu/moodleorientation) or visit the support page at [http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/students/](http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/students/).

Moodle 2.8 sites can be accessed on any computer that has an internet connection and a web browser. The UMN Moodle 2.8 support team recommends using Mozilla Firefox. For more information, including a free Firefox download, go to [http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/start/technical.html](http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/start/technical.html).
COURSE SCHEDULE
The course schedule is subject to modifications which will be announced in class and via email.

PART I: THE NATURE OF PUBLIC POLICY: WHAT IS IT? WHY STUDY IT?

Week 1 - January 20
Introduction
Introductions
Review Syllabus & Course Expectations
What is Public Policy?
Can we define public policy?
Required Readings:
Birkland, Chapter 1
Stone, Introduction & Chapter 1
Recommended: Start reading Stone, Part II, because you have a heavy reading load next week.
Assignment:
DUE by class time on 1/20: Please Read syllabus (yep, the whole thing!). Come to class prepared with any questions or comments.
Sign-up for student-instructor meetings (A sign-up sheet will be passed around in class on 1/20)

Week 2 – January 27
A Brief Introduction to the American Political System
Guest Lecture: TBD
Required Readings:
Stone, Part II (Chapters 2-6)
Public Policy Goals & Problems
What is public policy intended to do? What is it trying to solve?
Required Readings:
Stone, Part III (Chapters 7-11)
Assignment:
DUE 1/26 by 5pm: Sign-up for your two facilitation sessions (The sign-up sheet is found on Moodle)

PART II: PUBLIC POLICY IN CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Week 3 - February 3
Session with UMN Librarian
Guest: Mary Schoenborn, Liaison to Public Affairs Programs and Carlson School of Management
Required Readings:
Blog Post, “What makes a good source? (Or why should I believe you?)”
The Public Policy Environment
Power and the Policy Making System
Required Readings:
Birkland, Chapter 2
Assignment: DUE 2/2 by 5pm: Moodle message indicating your choice of organization

Week 4 – February 10
Public Policy Case Study – Part I
1964 – American Experience, PBS Documentary
Required Readings:
Kingdon, Chapter 1
Public Policy Case Study – Part II
1964 – American Experience, PBS Documentary
Required Readings:
MPR article, “Half of US says racial equality not yet a reality”
MPR article, “Wilder CEO sounds alarm on racial disparities”
Assignment:
DUE 2/9 by 5pm: Short Memo on organization and proposed problem/solution (submit via Moodle)

Week 5 – February 17
Putting it all in Context
Historical and Structural Contexts of Public Policy Making
Required Readings:
Birkland, Chapter 3
Assignment:
DUE 2/10 by 4:30pm (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
DUE 2/16 by 4:30pm (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)

Discussion Leaders:

PART III: THE ACTORS ON (AND OFF) THE PUBLIC POLICY STAGE

Setting the Stage
Where Policy Making Happens
Required Readings:
Theodoulou and Kofinis, Ch. 3
Assignment:
DUE 2/10 by 4:30pm (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
DUE 2/16 by 4:30pm (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
Discussion Leaders:
Week 6 – February 24
The Who’s Who of Public Policy
The Policy Making Actors on the “Inside”
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 4
Public Policy: The Essential Readings: Chapters 31, 35, 36, 38 (don’t worry, they’re short!)
Assignment:
**DUE 2/17 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
**DUE 2/23 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
Discussion Leaders: Hattie, Jase, & Kenneth
Peer Workshopping of Policy Environment Briefing Paper
Assignment:
Bring one hard copy of your draft policy environment briefing paper to class

Week 7 – March 2
The Who’s Who of Public Policy
Guests:
TBD
The Policy Making Actors on the “Outside”
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 5
Public Policy: The Essential Readings: Chapters 39, 40, 42, 43 (don’t worry, they’re short!)
Assignment:
**DUE 2/24 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
**DUE 3/1 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
**DUE 3/4 by midnight**: Briefing paper on policy environment (submit via Moodle)

Discussion Leaders:

PART IV: THE REALITIES OF MAKING PUBLIC POLICY: HOW THE PROCESS WORKS
Week 8 – March 9
First A Little Note On Theory…
The Models & Theories of the Policy Process
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 10
Kingdon, Ch. 4
Assignment:
**DUE 3/2 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
**DUE 3/8 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
Discussion Leaders:
What’s Your Problem?
Recognizing Problems & Issues
Required Readings:
Theodoulou & Kofinis, Ch. 6
Kingdon, Ch. 5
Assignment:
DUE by class time on 3/9 (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
DUE 3/14 by 5pm (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
**MID-SEMESTER ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION DUE MARCH 14 BY 5:00PM**

Discussion Leaders:

Week 9 – March 16
SPRING BREAK!!!!

Week 10 – March 23
Agenda Setting Part I
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 6
Kingdon, Chs. 6&7
Agenda Setting Part II
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 7
Kingdon, Chs. 8&9

Week 11- March 30
Policy Design
Formulating Policies
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 8
Assignment:
**DUE 3/23 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions (submit via Moodle)
**DUE 3/29 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question (submit via Moodle)
Beginning Monday, April 4th, you can sign-up on Moodle for a presentation time (choices will be class time on either 4/27, 5/4).

Discussion Leaders:

Policy Design In Practice
Guest: TBD
Week 12 – April 6
Policy Implementation
Executing Policy Solutions
Required Readings:
Birkland, Ch. 9
Public Policy: The Essential Readings: Chapters 49
Assignment:
**DUE 3/30 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions
(submit via Moodle)
**DUE 4/5 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question
(submit via Moodle)
DUE 4/8 by midnight: Op-Ed piece (submit via Moodle)

Discussion Leaders:

Policy Implementation in Practice
Guest: Jay Kiedrowski, Senior Fellow at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs; former Minnesota Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner of Finance; and former executive vice president for Wells Fargo and Company
Required Readings:
n/a
Assignment:
n/a

Week 13 – April 13
Policy Evaluation
Did it work? How do we know?
Required Readings:
Public Policy: The Essential Readings: Chapters 50, 51
Assignment:
**DUE 4/6 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Leaders only): Facilitation Plan and Discussion Questions
(submit via Moodle)
**DUE 4/12 by 4:30pm** (Discussion Participants only): Written response to 1 Discussion Question
(submit via Moodle)

Discussion Leaders:

Policy Evaluation in Practice
Guest: TBD
Required Readings:
n/a
Assignment:
n/a

Week 14 – April 20th
What’s Next?
Guest: Current and former Humphrey School graduate students
Required Readings:
n/a
Assignment:
DUE 4/25 by midnight: Policy tools memo (*submit via Moodle*)

**Public Policy Making on the Global Stage**  
*Guest: TBD*
Required Readings:

**Week 15 – April 27**  
**Student Presentations**
Required Readings:
n/a
Assignment:
Peer review comments on each presentation (*you will complete and hand in the reviews in class*)

**Week 16 – May 4**  
**Student Presentations**
Required Readings:
n/a
Assignment:
Peer review comments on each presentation (*you will complete and hand in the reviews in class*)

**Wrapping Up & Course Evaluations**
Assignment:
DUE 5/13 by midnight: Final Policy Portfolio (*submit via Moodle*)